

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Yerba Buena Island Lighthouse
other names/site number Goat Island Lighthouse

RECEIVED

MAY 7 1990

2. Location

street & number Yerba Buena Island N/A not for publication
city, town San Francisco vicinity
state CA code CA county San Francisco code 075 zip code 94130

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	3	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	1	_____
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____
		4	0
			Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
Light Stations of California

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Kathryn S. Sullivan
Signature of certifying official
California Office of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

11-5-90
Date

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

John C. HPO
Signature of commenting or other official
U.S. Department of Transportation
State or Federal agency and bureau

7/19/91
Date

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

Entered in the
National Register

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

Shelone Byers

9/3/91

for
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: water related.Domestic: institutional housing.

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: water related.Domestic: institutional housing.

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Stick/EastlakeOther: LighthouseLate Gothic Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brickwalls Wood: Weatherboardroof Wood: Shakeother Auxiliary Building: Brick,Concrete

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Yerba Buena Island Light Station is a small compact station consisting of a small tower, large Keeper's quarters, a fog-signal building, and oil house. It is located on the southern slope of Yerba Buena Island in the middle of San Francisco Bay. The lighthouse tower and oil house are located on a ledge 55' above the water. The fog-signal building is located one flight down toward the beach. The Keeper's house is 80 yards up the hill. All buildings and structures are contributing historic resources. Except for the 1907 oil house, all buildings and structures are from the original 19th century station. The architectural integrity of the individual buildings ranges from intact to mostly intact. The integrity of the lighthouse itself is intact (including the original lens) and its condition is excellent. Original resources no longer standing include the landing, the bell house and one portion of the fog-signal building. The site is surrounded by large Eucalyptus trees planted to commemorate California's first Arbor Day in 1886. The former Keeper's quarters is now home to the Commanding Officer of the 12th District Coast Guard. The grounds are planted with formal gardens and a well maintained lawn. To the east of the station lies the Coast Guard Base, San Francisco -- spawned from the original 12th Lighthouse District Depot established there in 1873.

1. LIGHTHOUSE TOWER -- CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE:

The lighthouse tower, located on a ledge 55' above the water, is a striking example of a late 19th century wood-frame lighthouse designed with Eastlake style ornamentation. The octagonal tower is topped by a glass and iron lantern room surrounded by an iron-railed gallery. The eight-sided pyramidal roof is made of copper and is topped by the standard type ball-vent found on most lighthouses of this time. The octagonal shaft of the tower is covered with horizontal wood siding and is pierced with three 4/4 windows and one entrance door. Although the structure's foundation is made of brick, only poured concrete is visible around the exterior base. Outstanding features include the Eastlake style wooden scrollwork and ornamentation decorating the eight cornerboards of the octagonal tower and the classical doorway pediment supported by scroll shaped consoles. What appears to be the original four paneled door is still in place. The numerals "1875" -- the date of the lighthouse's construction -- are enscribed above the doorway. The architectural integrity of the structure appears complete, including the original (still operating) 5th order Fresnel lens. The lighthouse even has in place the rarely extant "lure" -- the pear shaped chimney in the lantern room used to collect smoke from the oil lamp inside the lens. The condition of the structure is excellent. The Yerba Buena Island Lighthouse is the only freestanding wood-frame lighthouse tower still operating in California. Its elaborate Victorian era scrollwork and ornamentation further distinguishes it from most other California lighthouses.

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2. FOG-SIGNAL BUILDING (1875-1887) -- CONTRIBUTING BUILDING:

A one story, rectangular building with a peaked roof. The interior is comprised of one large open room that formerly housed the fog-signal equipment. The attic area is open to the ground floor and trusses and beams are exposed. Five windows are found on the west, south and east facades. A sliding wooden "industrial" door is found on the east facade as well. The north side of the building abuts the concrete retaining wall cut into the hill. The floor and foundation of the structure are of poured concrete. The roof is covered in red-stained wood shakes. The interior walls are covered with verticle tongue-and-groove paneling, painted white. A former lavatory room in the south-west corner now stands empty as a storeroom. The architectural integrity of the building is mostly intact. Coast Guard records indicate an enlargement and remodeling took place in 1887. The structural condition is good. The flat area adjacent to the fog-signal building formerly contained a duplicate fog-signal building that has since been demolished.

The overall design of the fog-signal building is similar to other fog-signal buildings in California light stations. Its one large room formerly contained the necessary equipment to run the fog-signal apparatus. Its unadorned design reflects the utilitarian usage of the building. Most were built of wood, although this one and several others are made of brick.

3. KEEPER'S QUARTERS (1873) -- CONTRIBUTING BUILDING:

A one-and-a-half story, Gothic dwelling constructed primarily of wood, the building rests on a brick foundation (with concrete repairs). The plan of the building is irregular with the steep roofline bisected by two prominent cross gables. The roof is covered with red-stain wood shakes. The building's sides are covered with horizontal clapboards. Outstanding features include the Gothic gable trim and the sweeping veranda that extends beyond the entire width of the facade. Architectural integrity of the building is very high and it is in excellent condition. A porch and service room has been added to the rear and a sun room has been added to the west side. Neither addition is particularly noticeable when viewing the building from the front. Coast Guard records indicate that the original building was covered in wood shingles, not the present clapboards. Modifications have occurred in the interior. The building was originally built as a duplex for the families of the Keeper and Assistant Keeper. Today the building is used as a single family home and is occupied by the Commanding Officer of the 12th District Coast Guard. Formal gardens and a well-maintained lawn surround the building. Many 19th century Keeper's quarters were built in the Gothic style -- both in California and throughout the United States. Today the only survivors in California are this building and the Keeper's quarters at Point Montara. Of the two, Yerba Buena Island retains the greater degree of Victorian Gothic character.

4. OIL HOUSE (1907) -- CONTRIBUTING BUILDING:

A small, flat-roofed, one-story, rectangular building made entirely of concrete with an iron door. Most other oil houses in California look exactly like this one. Its

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unadorned appearance reflects its utilitarian usage. The integrity of this building is intact and it appears to be in very good condition.

The Yerba Buena Light Station consists of one contributing structure and three contributing buildings. There are no modern or otherwise non-contributing buildings on the site.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Maritime History

Transportation

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1875-1940

Significant Dates

1875

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Yerba Buena Island Light Station meets the requirements for registration as defined in the multiple property submission "Light Stations in California." The station's significance is evaluated with respect to the historic context Maritime Transportation in California: 1842-1940. The station derives significance under Criteria A and C. Criteria A is satisfied by the association of the complex with California's critical reliance on maritime transportation and the aids that made navigation possible. Criteria C is met by the station's well-designed, original buildings remaining in an unaltered state. The tower and Keeper's quarters, especially, serve as excellent examples of the late 19th century styles Stick-Eastlake and Victorian-Gothic, respectively. When viewed together the buildings present an accurate portrayal of the design and construction of a late 19th century inner harbor lighthouse. There are no modern buildings in the complex to dilute the historical architectural representation.

The station fully meets registration requirements for its property type. It contains an intact lighthouse tower and associated historical buildings. The station, in fact, exceeds registration requirements. Its well-maintained lighthouse tower is completely intact including its still-operating 5th Order lens and the architectural integrity of each contributing building is complete (or nearly so) as well. Although many of the original buildings and structures are no longer standing (landing, bell house, half of fog-signal building), all of the remaining buildings are original. There are no modern, non-contributing buildings on the site.

The Yerba Buena Island Lighthouse was established to aid maritime traffic within San Francisco Bay. The 140 acre island is located 3 miles southeast of Alcatraz and rises 345 feet at its highest point.¹ Located in the center of the Bay, midway between San Francisco and Oakland, more maritime traffic passed by Yerba Buena than any other Bay island.²

The first people to utilize the island were the Costanoan Indians. They frequently sailed from one side of the bay to the other, conveniently stopping to gather acorns on the island's oak-studded hillsides. When the Spanish first visited the island they named it "Yerba Buena" or good herb, in recognition of the abundant mint plants that grew there.³

When the Americans arrived in 1849, they introduced goats and began cutting down the

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oak trees. Goat herding squatters would persist on "Goat Island" for years, finally driven off in 1870 when an Army base was developed on this strategically located island. The Army base was destroyed by fire not long after it was built, and the Army never returned.⁴

By the late 1860's San Francisco and Oakland had become major cities and travel between them was substantial. Yerba Buena Island lay in the midst of this increasing maritime traffic. Any inadequately marked island would be a hazard to navigation, but Yerba Buena was especially dangerous because of its proximity to several ferry routes. Thousands of commuters passed by the island everyday in addition to all San Francisco-bound passengers from the transcontinental railroad terminus in Oakland. With the annual passenger count running into the millions, the island could not remain unmarked.⁵

In 1870, the federal government laid claim to 2 1/2 acres on the island's extreme southeastern point for a lighthouse reversion.⁶ In 1872 Congress appropriated \$10,000 to begin work on a tower, Keeper's residence, and bell house.⁷ A year later the bell house, tower structure, and Keeper's dwelling were complete.⁸ Construction had been relatively easy. Between the goats and the wood-cutting squatters the land needed little clearing and the landing was able to be built at the base of the 50 foot cliff immediately below the lighthouse site.⁹

Fog was the biggest hazard at Yerba Buena, and the fog bell was operative nearly two years before the installation of the lighthouse lens. The 1873 Lighthouse Service Annual Report states that the fog bell was in place and operating in that year. The report also mentions that the fog bell had been transferred from the Point Conception Light Station in Southern California.¹⁰ A mechanical clockwork device caused the bell to be struck every 10 seconds. Apparently, the bell did not prove to be a sufficient warning device because the 1876 Annual Report states that a new steam fog-signal building had been completed on October 1, 1875.¹¹ The bell was kept as a back-up, however, to use if the fog-signal became disabled.¹² This occurred with some degree of regularity as the water to run the steam signal was often in short supply on the island. In the dry year of 1884 the fog-signal tanks had to be filled by pumping from a harbor water boat.¹³ The bell was switched with the Fort Point bell in 1879 to provide the latter facility with a larger bell. Fort Point had no steam signal at that time.¹⁴

Lighthouse Service records indicate the lighthouse tower was completed in 1873¹⁵, but that the lens installation would have to wait until it could be transferred down from the Yaquina Lighthouse in Oregon.¹⁶ The 5th order lens was later installed in 1875 and its stationary, white beam has been shining ever since.¹⁷ The Keeper's residence was completed in 1873 at about the same time as the bell house.¹⁸ This was almost two years ahead of the fog-signal and installation of the light. All of the buildings in the original station were white. The tower had a black roof. All the other roofs were red.¹⁹

The nature of maritime traffic has changed much since the station's founding. The completion of the Bay Bridge in 1936 -- tunneled through the middle of the island --

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signalled the end of the ferryboat era. World War II brought increased military traffic to the Bay. And the last several decades have seen a rise in Pacific maritime trade -- much of it conducted through the Port of Oakland. Throughout all these changes the same 5th order Fresnel lens on Yerba Buena Island has guided ships in the central bay for well over a century. The lighthouse was automated by the Coast Guard in 1958.²⁰ The tower was floodlighted in 1957 in an attempt to prevent birds from crashing through the lantern room windows. The experiment worked and now many lighthouses throughout the country are floodlighted at night.²¹

The area around the light station has also seen many changes since the station's founding. In 1873 when the first buildings were constructed, twenty-five years of goat herding and tree cutting had left the island a barren wasteland. California poet and naturalist Joaquin Miller started a tree planting program there to commemorate the state's first Arbor Day on November 27, 1886.²² Today the eucalyptus forests that cover the island are so thick and luxuriant that it is difficult to imagine the formerly barren hillsides.

Other changes have occurred in the lighthouse depot area immediately adjacent to the light station on the east. The Lighthouse Service had established the 12th District Lighthouse Depot on the island in 1873, the same year as the station's founding. The depot was the heart of the 12th District and serviced all the light stations, light ships, and buoys along the Pacific Coast. Principal components of the depot included storehouses and docks.²³ The depot has since grown to become Coast Guard Base, San Francisco, after 1960 and the 12th Coast Guard district's Commanding Officer presently lives in the commodious Victorian-Gothic Keeper's quarters of the lighthouse. "Tender" boats still depart from the old depot docks, though today they are more likely to be tending modern navigational buoys up and down the coast than the mostly-automated system of lighthouses.

The particular significance of the individual structures and buildings on the site are as follows:

LIGHTHOUSE TOWER (1875)

The lighthouse tower is of significance as the principal element of the light station. The structure fully meets requirements of its property type; it is a substantial structure built to contain a Fresnel lens (in this case 5th order) and its architectural integrity is complete (including the still operating lens). The lighthouse is similar to many other lighthouses of the time but it is unique in many ways as well. Its relatively small stature and small 5th order Fresnel lens categorize it with other inner harbor lighthouses of San Francisco Bay and similar harbors throughout the country. There were many more 5th order lenses employed in the East because there were many more harbors there to mark. Outside of San Francisco Bay, California made relatively little use of the smaller harbor lights along its long, rocky coastline. Additionally, Yerba Buena Lighthouse is unique among California lighthouses in that it is the only freestanding tower made of wood. Other frame lighthouse towers were always

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connected to the Keeper's residence in some fashion. Here the Keeper's residence is 80 yards up the hill. The tower's octagonal shape and its elaborate Victorian era Eastlake style ornamentation further distinguish it from other California lighthouses. The architectural integrity of the structure is intact. It includes the still-operating 5th order Fresnel Lens as well as the original "lure" -- the pear-shaped chimney placed over the lens to gather smoke and fumes from the oil lamp to the roof vent. This latter device is seldom seen in lighthouses anywhere in the country. Almost all were removed when oil lamps were replaced by electricity at the beginning of this century. The tower was actually completed in 1873 but over a year passed before an appropriate lens was located. Finally, the former lens from Yakima Lighthouse in Oregon was transferred to Yerba Buena Lighthouse where it has shone ever since.²⁴

FOG-SIGNAL BUILDING (1875-1887)

The fog-signal building is significant as a contributing element of the light station complex. Although originally constructed in 1875, Coast Guard records indicate that it was remodelled and expanded in 1887. During that same year a duplicate fog-signal building was erected on the concrete landing adjacent to the present fog-signal building.²⁵ It has since been demolished. The architectural integrity of the fog-signal building is mostly intact (minus the fog-signal equipment), though it is difficult to say with certainty which part of the building dates from 1875 and which from 1887. The building meets the registration requirements for its property type. It is very similar to other California fog-signal buildings. Its one large room formerly contained the mechanical equipment for the fog-signal system. Its unadorned design reflects its utilitarian usage. Most fog-signal buildings in California were built of wood, although this one and several others were built of brick.

KEEPER'S QUARTERS (1873)

The Keeper's quarters is significant as a contributing element of the light station complex. The building meets requirements for registration of its property type. The integrity of the structure is generally whole and most significant architectural features have been preserved. Alterations have been made over the years, however. A porch and service room has been added on to the rear and a sun room has been added to the west. Neither of these additions is particularly noticeable when viewed from the front. Coast Guard records also indicate that the exterior was originally covered in wood shingles instead of the clapboard that exists today.²⁶ Modifications were made in the interior as well. The building was originally built as a duplex to house the families of the Keeper and Assistant Keeper.²⁷ Today it is used as a single family home and houses the family of the Commanding Officer of the 12th District Coast Guard.

Many late 19th century Keeper's quarters in California and the nation were constructed in the Gothic style. In California, only this one and the dwelling at Point Montara survive. Of the two, Yerba Buena Island Keeper's quarters has retained the greater amount of historical architectural features. Its decorative gable trim, steep

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roof line with prominent cross-gables, and its massive corbeled chimneys clearly place the building in the center of the late 19th century Gothic style.

OIL HOUSE (1907)

The oil house is of significance as a contributing element of the station. It meets requirements for registration of its property type. It is structurally similar to other light station oil houses built in the early 20th century. Its fireproof concrete construction, with its iron door, and unadorned design reflects its utilitarian purpose. Like oil houses at other light stations, it is located near enough to the lighthouse to be convenient, but far enough away to avoid hazards. The architectural integrity of the Yerba Buena oil house appears to be intact.

Since its establishment in 1875 this station has had continual importance and significance. Significance has not been shown to be exceptional in the last fifty years, however, although the lighthouse continues to play a role in maritime transportation and navigation.

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NOTES

1. Gibbs, James, Lighthouses of the Pacific (West Chester, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 1986), p. 88.
2. Shanks, Ralph, Lighthouses of San Francisco Bay (San Anselmo, CA: Coastano Books, 1976), p. 23.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 24.
6. Ibid.
7. United States Department of the Treasury, U.S. Lighthouse Service, Annual Report 1873 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1874), p. 55.
8. Ibid.
9. Shanks, p. 24.
10. United States Department of the Treasury, U.S. Lighthouse Service, p. 55.
11. United States Department of the Treasury, U.S. Lighthouse Service, Annual Report 1876 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1877), p. 57.
12. Shanks, p. 24.
13. United States Department of the Treasury, U.S. Lighthouse Service, Annual Report 1884 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1885), p. 97.
14. United States Department of the Treasury, U.S. Lighthouse Service, Annual Report 1880 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1881), p. 65.
15. United States Department of the Treasury, U.S. Lighthouse Service, Annual Report 1873, p. 55.
16. Ibid.
17. Shanks, p. 24.
18. United States Department of the Treasury, U.S. Lighthouse Service, Annual Report 1873, p. 55.

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19. Shanks, p. 24.
20. Gibbs, p. 88.
21. Shanks, p. 29.
22. Shanks, p. 26.
23. Ibid.; see also U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Lighthouse Service (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1923), p. 60.
24. United States Department of the Treasury, U.S. Lighthouse Service, Annual Report 1873, p. 55.
25. United States Department of the Treasury, U.S. Lighthouse Service, Annual Report 1887 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1888), p. 97.
26. Ibid.
27. Shanks, p. 24.

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Gibbs, Jim. Lighthouses of the Pacific. West Chester, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 1986.
- Holland, F. Ross. America's Lighthouses, Their Illustrated History Since 1719. Brattleboro, VT: S. Green Press, 1972.
- Shanks, Ralph and Janette. Lighthouses of San Francisco Bay. San Anselmo, CA: Costano Books, 1976.
- U.S. Lighthouse Service, Department of Commerce or Treasury. Annual Report (various dates). Washington, D.C.: GPO.
- U.S. Lighthouse Service, Department of Commerce. The U.S. Lighthouse Service. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1923.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 2.69 acres

UTM References

A 10 556205 4184425
 Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
 Zone Easting Northing

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Tract #2 of the U.S. Military Reservation of Yerba Buena Island, exclusive of two parcels, together totalling 2.69 acres, shown on map numbered 6797-101, California Reservation Map, dated December, 1935, revised May 21, 1938, Department of Defense, Washington, D.C..

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the Yerba Buena Light Station embraces the buildings and immediate setting historically associated with the complex.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jack Bookwalter
 organization Sonoma State University date October 6, 1989
 street & number 767 Southwood Dr. telephone (707) 526-3197
 city or town Santa Rosa state CA zip code 95407

United States Department of the Interior
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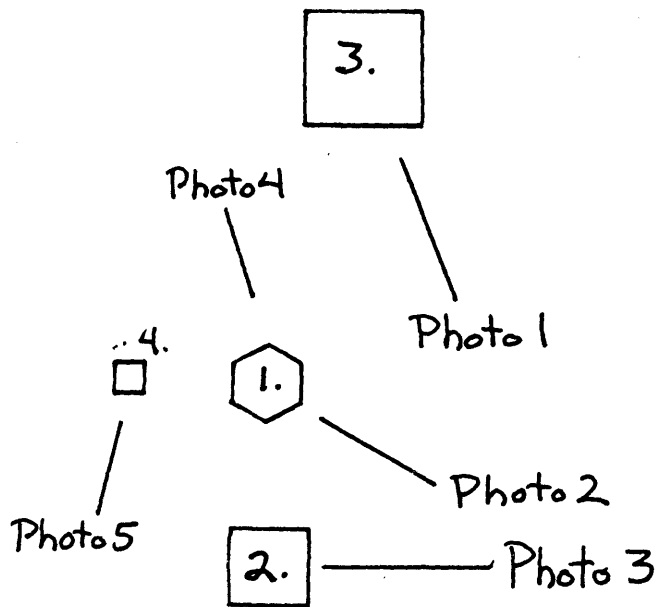
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Yerba Buena Island Lighthouse
Yerba Buena Island
San Francisco, CA
San Francisco County

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YERBA BUENA ISLAND
SKETCH MAP
Not to Scale



COAST GUARD
GROUP SAN FRANCISCO



Yerba Buena Island Lighthouse
 Yerba Buena Island
 San Francisco, California
 San Francisco County
 NTM: 10-556205-4184425

